APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES PATENT

in the name of

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Of

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for

Compact Disk Case

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Compact Disk Case

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/236,350, titled "PACKAGING FOR CD MAILER" and filed on September 29, 2000, which is incorporated by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention generally relates to compact disk (CD) cases.

BACKGROUND

CD cases may be used for CD storage and CD marketing and distribution. When used for CD distribution, cases may include lightweight packaging materials such as cardboard sandwiching the CD with cellophane covering the CD and cardboard to minimize shipping costs. Plastic, which is impact and wear resistant and more aesthetically appealing than cardboard, also may be used to fabricate CD cases.

SUMMARY

In one general aspect, a CD case includes a first side and a second side that are moveable between open and closed positions. At least the first side is structured and arranged to define a viewing window constituting less than all of that side to provide a first viewing characteristic that differs from a second viewing characteristic that is provided through another portion of the first side.

Implementations may include one or more of the following features. For example, the viewing window may be a hole on less than all of the first side. Furthermore, one or more viewing windows may be defined by the first side, or by the second side, or both. Portions of the first side positioned around the viewing window may be opaque. The viewing window may be positioned on the lower half of the first side of the case and may have a rectangular shape. The case may include a transparent or translucent material, e.g., a clear or colored plastic, to affect the first viewing characteristic.

In the closed position, the sides may form a cavity capable of accommodating a CD. The CD case may include a disk securing member located within the case, with a portion of the disk securing member extending away from that side to engage a center hole portion of a CD. The disk securing member may be structured to separate a flat surface of the CD from substantially flat surfaces of the CD case sides. The disk securing member may include a central portion that engages a CD and may be positioned on an inner surface member of the side.

A disk protecting member may be positioned to extend around a perimeter of a CD secured by the disk securing member. The CD case also may have a securing mechanism capable of securing the sides in the closed position during delivery of the CD case. The dimensions of the case may be greater than the dimensions of a Jewel case typically used to store CDs.

A CD may be positioned within the case. The CD may have a format that differs from a format of a digital versatile disk. The CD may store electronic marketing materials, including, for example, computer software for installing an Internet service provider on a personal computer.

In one implementation, a dual sided label may be affixed to a side of the case and positioned over a portion of the viewing window. The label may have information printed on both sides such that the information on a first side of the label is viewable while the case is in the closed position and the information on the second side of the label is viewable only while the case is in the open position. The first side of the label may contain information identifying an intended recipient and the second side of the label may contain marketing information relating the intended recipient to a marketing source. Postage also may be affixed to the case or to a wrapper around the case. The CD may be positioned within or outside of the case during mailing.

In another general aspect, marketing materials may be distributed on a CD. A CD that stores marketing materials may be obtained and installed in a CD case such as is described above. The CD case and the installed CD then are mailed to an intended recipient.

Recipients of CDs containing marketing materials may have a higher rate of response when they are able to view the CD through a viewing window prior to opening the

packaging. Moreover, viewing windows that are holes in the sides of the case may reduce the weight of the packaging and thus also reduce the cost of postage and shipping.

These features may be implemented using, for example, a method or a process, a device, an apparatus or a system, or software stored on a computer medium. The details of one or more implementations of the CD case and method of CD distribution are set forth in the accompanying drawings and the description below. Other features and advantages will be apparent from the description and drawings, and from the claims.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Figs. 1 and 2 are perspective views of a CD case.

Fig. 3 is a perspective view of the CD case with an attached label for use in distributing marketing materials.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart of a method of using a CD case to distribute marketing materials.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to Fig. 1, a case 100 for distribution and/or storage of a CD 110 generally includes first and second sides 120, 130, a seam or section 140, a disk securing mechanism 150, one or more viewing windows 160, and one or more locking mechanisms 170.

The CD 110 may be formatted as a digital versatile disk (DVD), but is generally formatted according to a non-DVD format. Marketing materials may be printed on the surface of the CD 110 and/or stored on the CD as digital data. For instance, when distributed by Internet service providers (ISPs), the marketing materials stored on the CD 110 typically include client installation programs designed to automatically configure or reconfigure a computer system to access a specified ISP. A recipient may use the CD 110 to install the client or other software on its computer, enabling access to the host machines of a designated ISP or access to the other software. The marketing materials also may be designed for different purposes and may include additional or alternative software programs and data to achieve those purposes.

In general, the case 100 has an outer shell with first and second sides 120, 130. Each side 120, 130 moves relative to the other side between an open position and a closed position.

This movement may be rotational about a hinge, for example, a seam 140, or it may be otherwise achieved, for example, by separating the sides using clasps. The first and second sides 120, 130 have relatively flat surfaces.

A cavity is generally formed by the first and second sides 120, 130 when in a closed position; the cavity is opened at its sides when first and/or second sides 120, 130 are without side edges 130a. A disk securing member 150 extends from the second side 130 within the cavity. A portion of the disk securing member 150 engages a center hole portion of a CD 110 placed in the cavity of the case 100 so as to fix the CD 110 within the cavity such that the flat surface of the CD 110 remains separated from the flat surfaces of the first and second sides 120, 130. As shown in Fig. 2, the disk securing member 150 may extend from an inner surface member 180 of the second side 130. In other implementations, the disk securing member extends from the first side 120.

At least one of the sides 120, 130 has one or more viewing windows 160 on a selected portion of the side, with the selected portion including less than the entire side. For example, the viewing window 160 may include approximately twenty percent (20 %) of the area of a side. The viewing windows 160 may constitute a hole in the side, and may be die cut, molded or otherwise formed. In some implementations, the viewing window 160 may include a transparent or translucent plastic sheet overlying the hole defining the viewing window 160. The viewing window also may include a transparent or translucent panel formed in the hole.

The viewing window 160 is typically rectangular and may be positioned in a lower portion of the first side 120. In other implementations, the viewing window 160 may have a different geometric shape, such as, for example, a circle, a triangle, or a diamond. Additionally, the viewing window 160 may be positioned elsewhere on the case, such as, for example, on an upper portion of the first side 120, on the second side 130, or in both.

The viewing window 160 may provide a view in to the cavity. When a CD 110 is enclosed inside the case 100, the viewing window 160 also may allow perception of the CD 110. For example, the viewing window 160 may be made of translucent plastic with a frosted appearance. In other implementations, the viewing window 160 may be covered by plastic tinted with a certain color so as to give the contents of the case a coloring or shaded appearance. Fig. 1 illustrates only one viewing window 160. However, more than one

viewing window 160 may be included at various positions on either of the first side 120 or the second side 130.

The components of the case 100, such as the sides 120, 130 and the disk securing member 150, are generally made from materials that render the components rigid enough to protect the CD 110 contained in the cavity, yet flexible enough to avoid permanent disfiguration if the CD case 100 is deformed, for example, during mailing. One or more of these components also may be made of other materials suitable for delivery by mail or similar means. Moreover, the sides 120, 130 may be made of layers of materials such as nylon, plastic, cardboard and cellophane. In one implementation, a cover may be provided over the sides 120, 130, with the cover being fitted to allow marketing information or other printed material to be inserted between a side 120, 130 and the cover. The cover may be made of a clear vinyl or plastic material, for example. The insert may include windows that correspond to the viewing windows 160 on the sides 120, 130, or inserts may be positioned above, below, beside, on an opposite side of the case 100, or otherwise positioned to avoid obstruction of the viewing windows 160.

The width, height and depth of the case are substantially greater than a width, height and depth of a Jewel case typically used to store CDs 110 having a non-DVD format. These increased dimensions enable separation of the flat surface of the CD 110 from the substantially flat surfaces of the first and second sides 120, 130, even when the sides of the case are locked in the closed position. For instance, the width, height and depth of the case preferably measure approximately 13.5 cm x 19 cm x 1.5 cm, while the width, height and depth of a jewel case tends to measure approximately 12 cm x 14 cm x 1 cm.

When in the closed position, the case 100 forms a cavity between the side portions 120, 130 within which the CD 110 is placed. An engageable locking mechanism 170 capable of securing the first and second sides 120, 130, for example, during delivery of the CD 110, may be located on the sides 120, 130 to secure the sides 120, 130 of the case 100 in the closed position around the enclosed CD 110.

Referring to Fig. 2, another view of the case 100 shows that the disk securing member 150 extends from the inner surface member 180. The inner surface member 180 may be, for example, a raised platform on the second side 130, a flat platform attached to the second side 130, a molded part of the second side 130. The case 100 also may include a disk protecting

member 190 positioned on the second side 130 and about the perimeter of a CD 110 secured by the disk securing member 150. The disk protecting member 190 protects the edges of an enclosed CD 110 from being chipped or scratched. The disk protecting member is generally a circular member and may be attached to or molded as part of the second side 130. The disk protecting member 190 may be continuous (as shown), sectioned, or may have recesses to allow a person to grasp the CD 110 to remove or install the CD 110 in the case 100.

Referring to Fig. 3, to enable mailing, identification information and/or postage may be contained on a label 310 that is affixed to the case 100. The identifying information may include address information, password, and other indicia and information, some of which may be used to identify the source of the recipient, such as, for example, a direct mailing list, from which the name of the intended recipient was obtained. The label 310 may be single sided or dual-sided and may cover at least a portion of the viewing window 160. When the label is dual-sided and positioned over at least a portion of the viewing window 160, the information on both sides of the label may be perceived depending on whether the case 100 is in a closed or open position.

In other implementations, the identifying information and postage may be printed directly on the case 100. Also, the information and postage may be applied to a cover or wrapper that is used to wrap the case 100 and that is made from, for example, cellophane, or a mailer made from, for example, cardboard.

A CD 110 within a CD case 100 like that described with respect to Figs. 1-3 may be distributed as marketing materials, using for example, a process like that shown in Fig. 4. The method for distributing marketing materials 400 generally includes obtaining a CD 110 on which marketing materials are stored (step 410), installing the CD into a case (step 420), and intentionally mailing the case containing the CD to an intended recipient (step 430).

Obtaining a CD (step 410) generally includes obtaining one or more CDs 110 from wholesale suppliers, for example, in bulk supply. The CDs 110 may include computer software. For example, the computer software may include software capable of installing an ISP on a personal computer, and also may or alternatively include software for performing other functions. Additionally, obtaining a CD (step 410) may include obtaining CDs 110 that include printed advertisements on one or both surfaces.

Installing the CD into a case (step 420) may include installing the CD 110 into any of several cases 100, such as those described with respect to Figs. 1-3. In general, the CD 110 is installed into a case 100 including a first side 120 and a second side 130 that define a cavity when in a closed position, with at least one of the sides having one or more viewing windows 160 on less than all of its surface.

Furthermore, installing the CD 110 into the case 100 (step 420) may include securing the CD 110 in the case 100 using the disk securing member 150 by, for example, actuating the disk securing member 150 to engage the CD 110 by moving a central portion of the disk securing member 150 toward the second side 130 from which the disk securing member 150 extends.

Mailing the case 100 containing the CD 110 to an intended recipient (step 430) generally includes applying postage and/or applying identifying information to the case 100 directly or applying the postage and/or identifying information to the case 100 indirectly using a label 310, cover, wrapper, or otherwise, as described above with respect to Fig. 3. If indirectly applied to a cover, for example, cellophane, placed around or over some or all of the case 100, mailing may include covering the case 100 with the cover before mailing. If indirectly applied to a mailer made from, for example, cardboard, mailing may include inserting the case 100 in to a mailer to which postage and identifying information are applied.

The case is generally useful as a storage or archival medium for the CD 110 upon receipt by the mailing recipient. A number of implementations of the CD case have been described. Nevertheless, it will be understood that various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, other implementations are within the scope of the following claims.